

Seminar week 20
Week 20- Lecture 20
International Human Rights
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Are human rights universal? Should they be?

Are human rights opposed to culture?

- **Normative relativism:** "standards and values are relative to the culture from which they derive so that any attempt to formulate postulates that grow out of the beliefs or moral codes of one culture must to that extent detract from the applicability of any Declaration of Human Rights to mankind as a whole". (American Anthropological Association, 1947)
- **Substantive relativism:** "Human rights ideas, embedded in cultural assumptions about the nature of the person, the community, and the state, do not translate easily from one setting to another. If human rights ideas are to have an impact, they need to become part of the consciousness of ordinary people around the world". (Sally Engle Merry, *Human Rights and Gender Violence*, 2006)

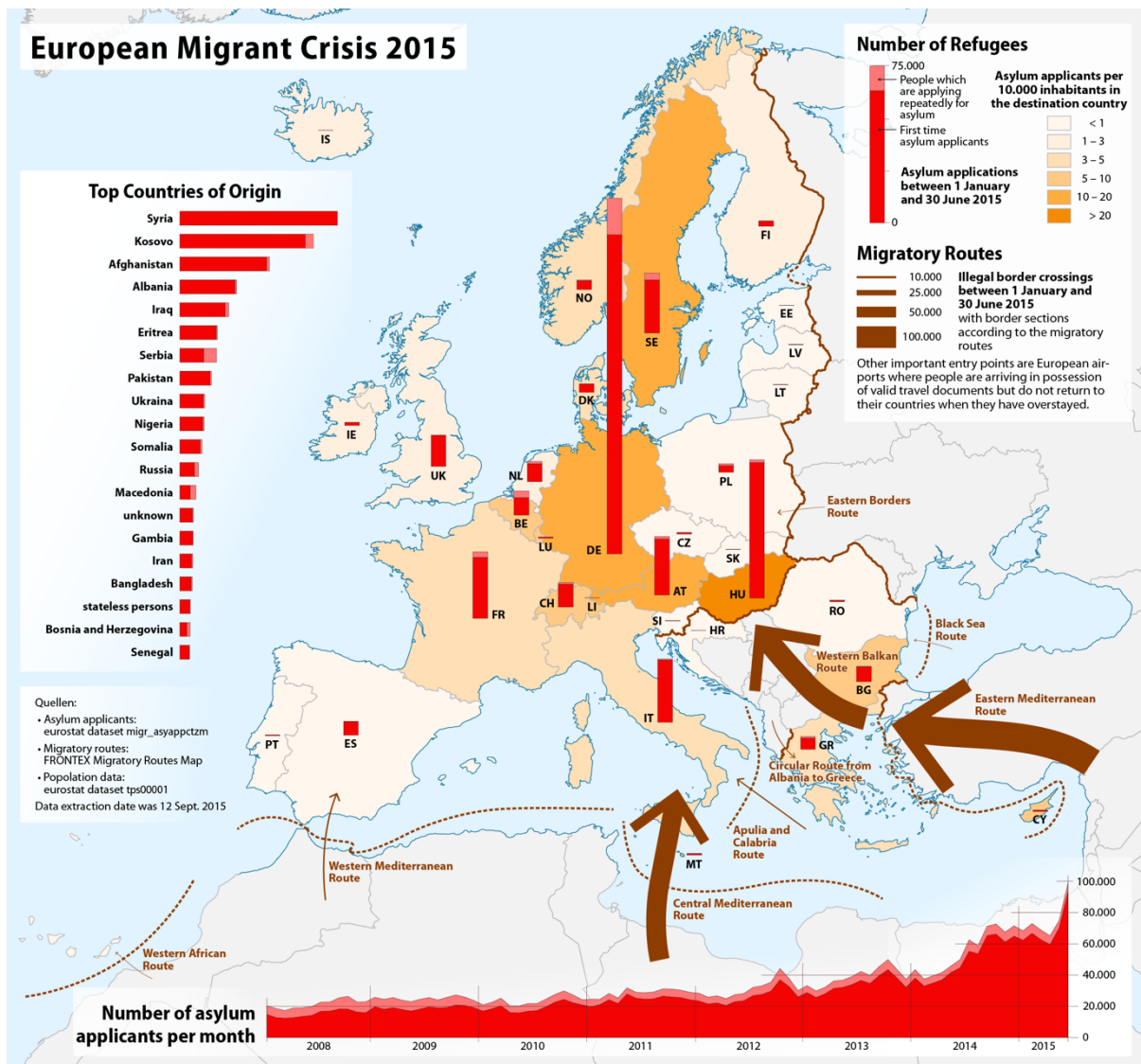
Are we, therefore, destined to return to a world similar to 1939 if not 1914 in which international law and organization are marginal matters, existing polities do whatever their respective powers allow with scant regard for the fate of most individuals, and the crux of international developments revolves around national conceptions of advantage and greatness, not individual autonomy and respect?
(Hard times for human rights, Forsythe 2017)

Humanitarian intervention

- What situations require humanitarian intervention?
- What would be a successful humanitarian intervention?
- Who should undertake this intervention? State actors or international organisations?
 - The discourse of humanitarian intervention constructs "'victims' as essentially passive, depoliticized and in need of international intervention. The victim is cause, object, but never actor or subject". (Mégret, 2009)

Is the right to mobility an important human right?

Do states owe any obligation to humans beyond their own borders? Why? Why not?



Should assimilation be a criterion for admitting migrants? Why? Why not?

[Who is Shamima Begum and how can you lose your citizenship?](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/explainers-53428191)

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